

# **Introduction to Philosophy of the Human Person**

## **Quarter 2 – Module 1: Freedom and Responsibility**



## ***What is It***

### **HUMAN ACTIONS VS ACTS OF MAN**

An act that is performed only by a human being and thus is proper to man. Not every act that a human being does is a distinctively human act. Some acts that human beings do are performed also by animals, e.g., vegetative acts and acts of perception and emotion. When a human being does such acts, they are called acts of man but not human acts. Acts of man are actions shared by humans and other animals while human acts refer to the appropriate actions of human beings. What makes an act performed by a human being distinctively a human act is that it is voluntary, that is, an act in some way under the control or direction of the will, which is proper to man. One can therefore identify the human activity with the voluntary act. A voluntary act continues either by the will - like an act of love or choice - or from another human power that may be motivated by the will, either by an act of intellect or by the sense of reasoning or emotion; even a gesture commanded by the will can be a voluntary act.

### **Aristotle's Distinction of Voluntary and Involuntary Actions**

**Voluntary Actions** - these are acts originating from the individual performing the act using knowledge about the situations of the act.

#### **1. Classifications of Voluntary Actions**

- A. Voluntary – actions are performed from will and reason.
- B. Related to Compulsion - it is considered as mixed of voluntary and involuntary. It is more voluntary if the desire and choice has been performed and involuntary if it has considered preferences or alternatives. Example: You are asked to perform a crime and your options are; either you do it and your family survives or you don't do it but they will be murdered.

**2. Involuntary Actions** – are acts done under a) force or coercion and b). ignorance where the doer failed to understand the effect and feels sorry on the result.

#### **Classifications of Involuntary Actions**

- A. Under Compulsion – circumstances which are beyond the control of the agent and contributes none to the action. Example: A person was kidnapped, hence impossible to resist.

- B. Through Ignorance of Particular Circumstances. Example: a man steals and ignorant of the law, arrow or gun shot by mistake.

## **HUMAN FREEDOM AND OBLIGATION**

According to John Mothershead, freedom and obligation are two indispensable conditions for morality to occur. Freedom is understood to be present when one is choosing a course of action, and he or she is taking full responsibility for consequence of his actions. Importantly, this is anchored to the individual's moral and rational capacity to discern what is right and wrong.

In several meta-ethical traditions obligation usually follows or arrives from freedom. Freedom can be said to be present if the human person is free in making choices in the realm of morality – that is, in making choices with regards to determining what is the right thing to do in situations and circumstances in his own life. This can be summarized in our Filipino saying, “*Buntot mo, hila mo!*” It is taking full responsibility for your actions and being obliged to do so. Hence, an action is not in the full extent of morality if a person does something while his or her freedom and rationality is altered or modified. This event can happen if the person's environment highly affects his judgement.

When was the last time you see yourself escaping from the consequences of your actions? When was the last time you hide from the problems brought about by your irresponsible actions? We have the tendency to blame others for their choice of a course of action. At present times, several marriages – most especially in the Philippines – are being brought to different courts of law to be annulled. What is the main reason for this? Atty. Jim Lopez in one of his books says that most of the marriages which are tried in civil courts are sagas of unending throwing of blame and accusations between two lovers. Which can be simply be solved had one of the parties make himself accountable for a problem which sit between them.

## **INTELLECTUAL CHOICE VS PRACTICAL CHOICE**

- A. Intellectual Choice** – This is a choice which is deliberately selected based on a moral standpoint. Basically, they are normative answers about what we ought to do from a moral system that we uphold and its moral principles. These normative answers would take into consideration the behavior which the society will accept. For example, when you are to decide in a moral issue, you can try to give intellectual choice as a normative answer. Here you are simply assuming because you are not, as it were, facing that actual moral situation described in the dilemma. In this case, the answers that you are inclined to give are prescriptive in this imaginary and hypothetical situation.

**B. Practical Choice** – a choice which is borne out of psychological and emotional considerations. Unlike the previously discussed type of choice, practical choices are made when confronted with the actual situation, and usually affected by psychological aspect of the person embroiled in the moral situation or dilemma. For instance, psychological and emotional stress and lack of time to deliberate during an actual moral situation may affect a person's moral decision in that situation. A person may be so engulfed by emotions that he may sometimes fail to make the right choice. Likewise, stress could make a person's practical choice inconsistent with his intellectual choice.